

RECKLESS RALPH'S

DIME NOVEL ROUNDUP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers. Published by Ralph F. Cummings, Pleasant St., Grafton, Mass. U.S.A.

Price \$1.00 per year or ten cents a copy.

VOL. 5

JULY 1936

NO. 52

BOOKLET NOVELS versus BLACK & WHITES.

Since the publication of Cummings Dime Novel Catalogue, much discussion pro and con has ensued between collectors relative to the value of booklet novels compared to their successors, blacks and whites. By booklet novels I mean the early small pocket size novels such as Beadle's Dime Novels, New Dime Novels, Munro's Ten Cent Novels, DeWitt's Ten Cent Romances, Frank Starr's American Novels, Beadle's Pocket Novels and several other kinds of the same type. Several collectors think booklets are worth more than black and whites, but the majority think otherwise, I think. Before writing this article I asked several prominent collectors what their views were regarding the matter. Most of them were inclined to be a bit non-committal, saying they did not collect, or care to collect the booklet type novel, so were unprepared to say whether or not they were more valuable than black and white.

Personally, I am of the opinion that booklets never were, are not, nor ever will be, in as much demand as black and white novels. Therefore, less valuable. Demand creates value always. But before going further, I want to express the opinion of a collector, who without

doubt has the largest general collection of novels in America. This collector says that in a few years the collectors of rare books will turn to dime novels and naturally will turn to booklets as the original first editions. Well and good. This remains to be seen. Another old time collector, a very good friend of mine, and a man whose opinion I value highly, says that he also thinks that in the future, that booklets will have a greatly increased value due to their scarcity, and also because they are originals. Yet in spite of the opinions of these two collector friends, my own opinion is unchanged. Dime novels are collected largely for sentimental reasons. While various other reasons are ascribed to collecting them, sentiment is the real basic reason. We can't get away from it. We surround ourselves with novels we knew and loved as boys and young men. Several collectors, men of means, who can afford to collect any type of novel that attracts them collect only colored cover novels. As these were the kinds they knew as a boy. Booklets and black and whites don't interest them. Then there is the older collector who collects only black and whites, the only kind he knew and loved as a boy. Colored covers had not come into existence in his boyhood, so he is not interested in them. Then there is the collector, like myself, who can claim the happy medium. When I first started to read novels, colored covers were just coming into existence, and black and whites passing out. So I had my favorites in both kinds but where are the men who read booklets in their youth? Passed away, the larger part of them, and with them passed the larger part of the demand for booklet novels. Judging from precedents, we have one very good precedent to judge by. This was the sale of the famous O'Brien collection by The Anderson Galleries of New

York in 1920. At this sale, booklet novels sold for far lower prices, than the same story in reprint form, in black and whites. Why ? Because as I stated above, those who were interested in booklets, had largely passed on. Dealers in dime novels, find booklets more or less of a "white elephant" on their hands, and hard to sell. Any dealer, if he is honest with you will tell you this. If I had the cash to spare, and were so inclined (which I would not be) I know where I could buy large quantities of booklet in mint condition for \$2.00 or less per copy. But try and buy any Wide Awake Library issues of the "Frank Reade" series for that price. Or any of the rare Beadles Dime or Half-Dime Libraries, such as "Wild Bill" or "California Joe" items. I can obtain for you, up to \$5.00 per copy for almost any issues of Little Chief Library in good condition. Where can you obtain that price for the most rare of your booklet novels? I will even go a step further and say that certain of the colored cover novels are worth more than booklets. This may cause some of you old time collectors to smile, but it is a matter that you can easily prove for yourself.

If, in your collection, you have some Handsome Harry, James Boys Weekly, Jesse James Stories, Klondike Kit, Adventure Weekly and Blue and Gray, just offer them for sale at \$2.00 each, or up to what you consider them worth; and at the same time offer your booklet novels at about one half the price you have put on your colored covers. You will find that you will still have booklets left on your hands, after your colored covers have gone at double the price of the booklets. So, if at the present time, even certain colored cover novels are worth more than booklets, what chance has

the latter in the future, compared with the constantly increasing price of black and whites and colored covers ?

PLANET PLANE

By John Beynon.

(Author of "Secret People" and "Foul Play Suspected.")

A novel of outstanding imaginative originality.

The time is 70 years hence. Many expeditions to Mars have been planned--none have been successful. Dale Constance builds a Rocket Plane which is an improvement on all others and he, with four chosen companions start out. After a few days travel they discover a fifth member of the expedition--a stowaway girl--hidden in the plane.

The rocket plane reaches Mars and the adventures that follow are reminiscent of Verne and Wells with a dash of sharp satire, added. NOTE: Shades of Frank Reade and Jack Wright. Even the present day writers have contracted the "itch" to select thrilling tales of air flights.

"FIFTY YEARS AGO"

by

Patrick Mulhall.

(Castlecomer, Ireland.)

"An aggressive and well-planned campaign for subscriptions conducted about this time by other periodicals reaching the home, furnished ready funds through 1884 and 1885."

The passage given above is taken from an article on "The Golden Argosy", which appeared in an early number of the "Dime Novel Round-Up".

Perhaps a few further notes on that journal might be of interest to the readers of this paper; they may not be aware that this campaign referred to in the article, extended overseas and was carried on in England in the year 1885.

To give you an idea of the nature and the scope of this "big drive" for funds, there follows a copy of an advertisement which appeared in a number of English Papers during that year. Here is the advertisement in full:

" THE GOLDEN ARGOSY is a Weekly Paper for the Father, the Mother, the Boys and the Girls. It is one of the most Beautiful, Useful, Entertaining, Instructive and Popular Weeklies published. It is Beautifully Illustrated, and its reading matter is all Original from the pens of noted authors. Its regular subscription price is Two Shillings for Three Months; Four Shillings for Six Months; Eight Shillings for Twelve Months, without present or premium; but in order to secure 100,000 new subscribers at once, we make the FOLLOWING LIBERAL OFFER: FOR TWO SHILLINGS or 25 Stamps, we will send you The Golden Argosy, weekly, for 3 Months and one numbered receipt, good for one present. For Four Shillings, we will send THE GOLDEN ARGOSY, weekly, for Six Months, and two numbered receipts, good for two presents. For Eight Shillings we will send THE GOLDEN ARGOSY, weekly, for One Year, and four numbered receipts, good for four presents. Write your name and address plainly.

YOUR SUBSCRIPTION FREE. If you will Cut this Advertisement Out and show it to your friends, acquaintances and neighbors, and get five to subscribe for three months, and send us Ten Shillings, we will send your subscription Free, and One numbered receipt; get ten

to subscribe, send 20s, and we will send you Two numbered receipts and The Golden Argosy for Six Months; get twenty to subscribe, send 40s, and we will send you the Golden Argosy for One Year and Four numbered receipts good for Four Presents. A little work will give you a Subscription Free, and a chance to win one of the most valuable prizes. Sample Copies, 2d. post paid, or all Newsagents.

LIST OF THE AWARDS will be forwarded to all subscribers after MARCH 16th. Remit by P.O., Registered Letter or Stamps. Address-- THE GOLDEN ARGOSY CO., E.B. Lewis, Manager, 13, Salisbury Square, Fleet Street, London, E.C.

Remember, the above Presents are given absolutely free to our Subscribers and our Agents. CUT OUT THIS and show it to your friends, neighbors and acquaintances. "

Six thousand pounds in prizes. A bold bid indeed for the patronage of the youth of Britain, and considering the state of the Office Treasury at that time, an exceeding generous one. But it may be doubted that the response was sufficient to warrant the expenditure of the equivalent of thirty-thousand dollars on prizes. There was apparently a slump in subscriptions after the prize distribution (which took place about the 1st of April), and before the end of the second quarter of the year it was necessary to announce another Grand Offer of Prizes.

This time, however, the prizes amounted to a mere one thousand dollars. They were to be awarded to new subscribers who would send the correct answer to the simple question: "Where in the Bible is the word "Mirth" first mentioned?" Presumably a competition of this character was expected to make a

good impression on parents and guardians, on whose approval would depend the providing of the necessary half-dollar for a quarter-year's subscription, but the younger folks might possibly have had a secret preference for a search through the pages of "The Boy's Comic Journal" for the word in question.

However, the "Golden Argosy" failed to find favor with either the high-brow school of readers of such papers as "The Boy's Own Paper", or with those boys of England who preferred "The Boy's Standard" and revelled in "The Boy's World", and seems to have dropped out of notice by the end of the year.

Perhaps the alluring slogan at the head of the front page was taken too literally by the youthful readers of the journal, and while inspiring them with visions of bicycles, watches and magic lanterns, left them unappreciative of the treasures that lie within its pages.

One thing that have militated against the success of the campaign was the appearance of a competitor in the market, offering ten thousand pounds in prizes to subscribers to a periodical called "The Household Journal", which was, I believe, another American publication with a London distributing office.

At that time "The Golden Argosy" was an insipid sort of a journal, with scrappy illustrations and an unattractive appearance. Among the serials in the English issues of 1885 were "Campfire and Wigwam" by Edward S. Ellis and "Helping Himself" by Horatio Alger, Jr., these two being about the best of the lot.

From Mr. Singleton's article, referred to above, we learn of where and how "The Golden Argosy" became a real, live paper, which, on its own merits, and independently of flaring prize lists, was able to hold a place in competition with the other boys' papers of its day. But that came later than 1885.

Few, if any, copies of the English issues of the journal have survived the half century, and little trace, save the advertisement, remains to remind us of that hopeful day in January, 1335, when "The Golden Argosy" entered the Port of London, freighted with Treasures for Boys and Girls.

HOW I GOT AQUAINTED WITH THE DIME NOVEL

By an Ex-Member of H.H.B.

The first time I ever saw a dime novel was away back in 1915 or '16. At that time, I was just a boy of twelve. I can still remember the incident as though it were but yesterday. At that time I lived in a small town of some 2000 population, and being so small, there was no regular news-stand in the town. However, there was a pool room that sold newspapers, magazines etc., and it was at this place that I caught my first glimpse of a dime novel.

I had been agent for the Saturday Blade, Chicago Ledger and Lone Scout for some time, the last named being a paper for boys. No doubt, many members of H.H.B. remember it, for it was widely read and had some really good stories published in it. In passing this pool room one day my attention was attracted to a display of Tousey novels and I was much impressed by same, for, I said to myself, here is something different. As the reader may surmise, I didn't have a great amount of money in my possession at this time and being an ardent movie fan (The movies were just beginning to be really popular then, in this town), I was forced to choose between the two. As the movies were my final choice, it was destined to be some months later before a novel found it's way into my hands. At about this time my father decided to move to a large town in

Virginia, as he could get work at a much higher wage there. After I had got settled in my new home, I again started selling the newspapers. I would always have some copies of Lone Scout left unsold. So one day I got acquainted with a fellow who had some copies of Wild West Weekly. We got together and started an arrangement whereby I received his copy of Wild West Weekly after he had finished with it, for which I gave him a copy of Lone Scout. After this I started ordering back numbers and later formed a partnership with three other fellows. We pooled our resources and bought hundreds of back numbers of the Tousey novels. So far they were the only novels I knew about. However I was due for a surprise for one day as I was going down the street my attention was attracted by an improvised news stand made of packing cases and literally covered with old timers of all descriptions. There were copies of Tip Top, Wide Awake Weekly, Brave and Bold, Happy Days and many others. This most interesting display of novels was presided over by a young boy, who informed me that he had been hired to sell the novels by a fellow who had been collecting them and then decided to stop and sell out all he had on hand. Needless to say, I bought all that my limited resources permitted right then. And each week I would go down town and bring back an armful as long as they lasted. It was about this time that I saw an ad in one of the current issues of one of the Tousey novels (along in 1919, I think it was) stating that one Ralph P. Smith had back numbers of Wild West, Pluck & Luck, etc., for sale. I lost no time in getting in touch with Mr. Smith by mail. In due time I received his list and got another surprise. He listed me novels that I knew were at least 1905 or '06

issues and I had no idea they could be obtained so far back. I was therefore, somewhat doubtful that he really had 'em, but decided to take a chance. So I sent a small order and was glad I did, for within a week, the novels showed up, all O.K. A little later I got acquainted with Ralph Cummings, who, incidentally, has been one of my best friends in the novel game, as since I became acquainted with him, I have received invaluable aid in locating novels and thus adding to my collection. It was a lucky day in my life when I found out about these boys, as well as the other members of the H.H.B. One couldn't find a finer, squarer bunch of fellows in a year's travel.

So this is the story of how I got acquainted with the old dime and nickel novel. Who has a more interesting one to tell on the same subject ?

ITEMS OF INTEREST.

Send Ten Cents to T.G. Mauritzen, Editor and Publisher, 610 Rives-Strong Bldg., 112 W. 9th St., Los Angeles, California, for a copy of "The Welcome News". There's a fine two page article on "Dime Novel Again Haunts America", by W.D. Woodson. Has two electrotypes of the N.Y. Detective Library and Beadle's Half Dime Library. Better send for a copy now, for it sure is "Welcome News" to us all. Has 32 pages size 6x9 inches and has lots of other fine tales, too.

Hasn't Charlie Austin a fine lot of old timers on the last page, and this: isn't all he has, either, for he has both "Greys" and "Paints" as well, so send him your want list, and he'll treat you right.

Patrick Mulhall, Co. Kilkenney, Castlecomer, Ireland, wants the "Swordsman of Warsaw", also "Ralpho of the Iron Arm" that appeared in some

of Street & Smiths 15c novels fifty years ago, he also wants old Street & Smith and Frank Tousey Novel Catalogues, too. Give Patsy a chance and he'll treat you right.

Answer to question in May issue of Round-up, by Bob Smeltzer as to who was Bandbox Bill, a character in Beadles Dime Library number 882.

Beadles Dime Library number 882, entitled "The Three Bills; Buffalo Bill, Wild Bill and Bandbox Bill; or, The Bravo in Broadcloth." The two former, we know, were real characters. The latter was a purely fictitious character named Mortimer Bainbridge. In Beadles Dime Library number 904 the Three Bills appear again in a tale entitled "Buffalo Bill's Tangled Trail; or, Gentleman Jack, the Man of Many Masks". This latter number (904) is a gem, and worth keeping in any collection of Dimes as it contains as leading characters, Dr. Frank Powell, Texas Jack, Capt. Jack Crawford and Buckskin Sam in addition to the "three Bills."

Oliver Optic was the pseudonym of William Taylor Adams who wrote 126 novels for young people.

Will someone comment on the "Richmond Novels"? ? Richmond Ten Cent Novels were different from other novels, and not so wholesome for boy readers. It seems that they fed into the young imagination something that did not belong there, what would now be called "Sex Stuff." The publisher of the Roundup is curious to know whether he is right about this, or not. Perhaps the novels were better and did no harm, which I hope is so. I shall be extremely glad if someone will comment on this. But as for the novels, they were "rich reading" for all of that generation. Write the publisher what you know about the Richmond Novels prior to 1876.

Say Fellows ,---get adhesive Cellophane for taping your novels and story papers. It's the applesauce alright.--George Grench.

Have you seen a copy of "A Catalog of Dime Novel Material", including a section on Buffalo Bill ? If not, better send for a copy of the catalog now, price \$1.00 and if you buy, amount may be applied to the purchase of any items. Charles Bragin has a fine article on "The Dime Novel". Send a buck to-- John A. Hayes. 15 Reckless Place, Red Bank, N.J.

 PARTIAL LIST OF MEMBERS OF
 H.H.B. for 1936

Nos.

- 8. Lacey D. Irwin, Box 117, Kane, Ill.
- 10. L.C. Skinner, 36 Chaplin St. Pawtucket, R.I.
- 11. J.D. Harding, 634 S. Broad St., Burlington,
N.C.
- 12. Gorge French, 121 W. Passaic Av.,
Bloomfield, N.J.
- 14. Wm. M. Kreling, 180 San Anselmo Ave.,
San Francisco, Cal.
- 21. Fred P. Pitzer, 41 Woodlawn Ave.,
Jersey City, N.J.
- 23. Charles H. Austin, 2241 N. 29th Street,
Philadelphia, Pa.
- 34. Edward Le Blanc, 112 Union Street,
Fall River, Mass.
- 46. Patrick Mulhall. Co. Kilkenny, Castlecomer,
Ireland.

Change of Address:

Honorary Member # 108 is now--1228 15th St.,
Rock Island, Ill. Wm. W. Giles is the gent.

 Reprinted (by mimeograph) March 5th,
 1952, for Ralph F. Cummings. Fisherville,
 Mass., by
 Smoke Signals Associates, Worcester, Mass.